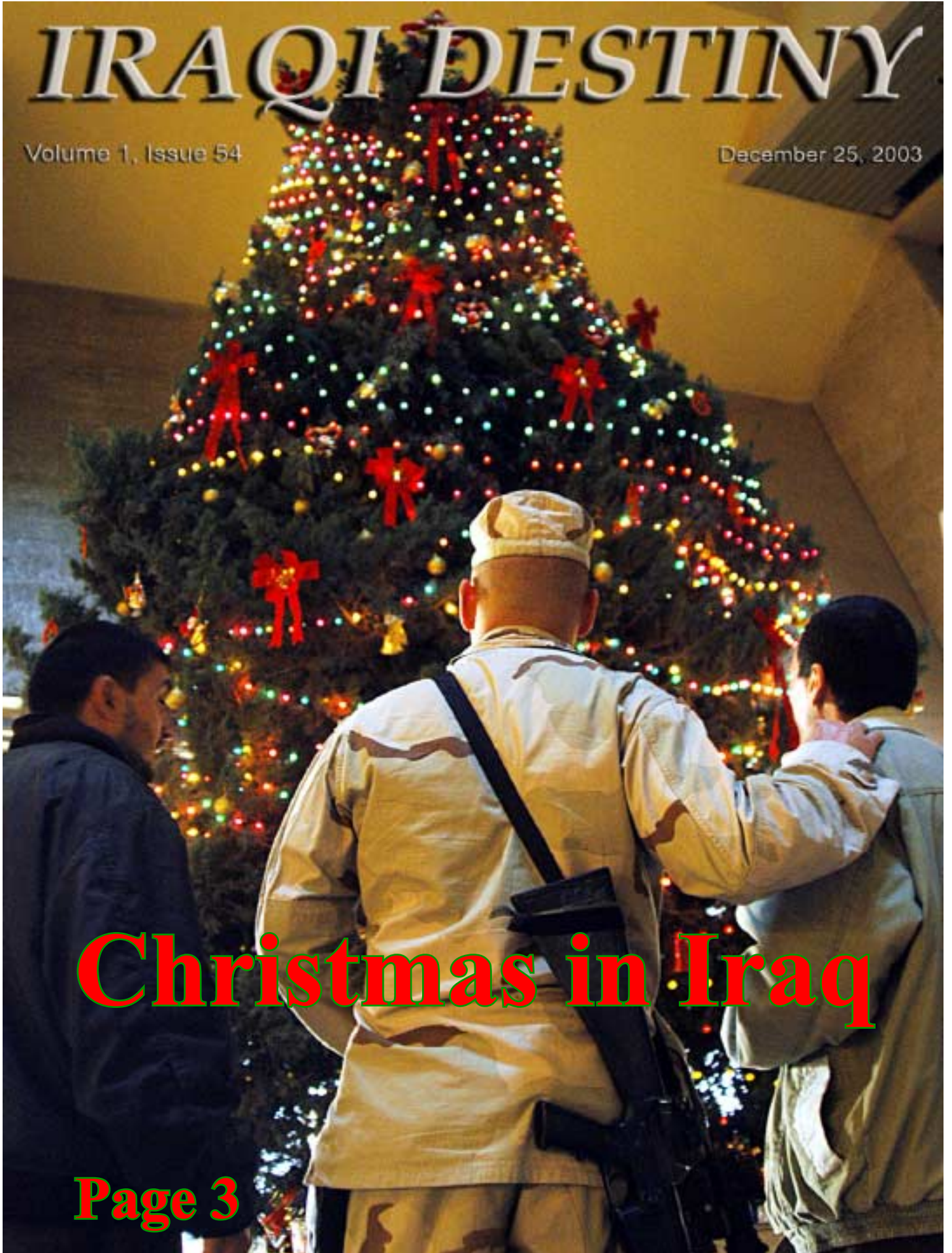


# *IRAQI DESTINY*

Volume 1, Issue 54

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## **Christmas in Iraq**

**Page 3**

# A soldier's perspective on Christmas in Iraq

by Sgt. Robert Woodward  
40th PAD

Today is Christmas. It is a strange time of year for me, and I think for many soldiers here in Iraq, because all the decorations, feasting and holiday music, while wonderful, draw our attention to what's missing in our lives. Our families. Our neighborhoods. Our country.

War in a strange land can make you appreciate home much more than you ever thought possible. So on the surface I was jubilant. Underneath I was homesick. To distract myself from what I was missing, I focused instead on work, which brought me into contact with an Iraqi man, Hamid, who lives in Mosul.

When our business was nearly concluded, Hamid asked, "How do you feel

about being in Iraq on this day?"

The frankness of the question stunned me, and I struggled past my emotions. Once I started to speak, the words seemed to flow from a place deep inside me.

"Of course I miss my family," I said, "but the spirit of Christmas is one of giving. I joined the Army to give of myself to serve the cause of freedom. By being here I am not only serving the cause of freedom for Americans, but also for Iraqis. So I am happy to be here today."

Hamid stood before me speechless. Did I see something twinkle in his eyes?

At that moment, I felt as though we were brothers. Soon we parted. I went to my work area in the division headquarters, and he went to his in downtown Mosul, perhaps never to meet again.

Now, upon reflection, I realize that I did spend Christmas with my family. I was here with my Screaming Eagle brothers

and sisters.

I was here with them serving our long lost Iraqi brothers and sisters, who for the first time in generations, perhaps ever, can choose what they will believe. We are helping to change Iraq and the Middle East.

We are helping to change the things here that lead to terrorism--the ignorance, the poverty, the fear.

And Iraq has changed me, too, for how can I live without serving humanity? How can I return to America and live for materialism, for self-satisfaction?

I think Iraq has changed many soldiers, and I think that we will take back to America the kind of selfless service that one can only acquire in war. They are leaders who will make a difference in the world of tomorrow.

Yes, I am happy to be in Iraq today, and honored to be counted in the number of my fellow American soldiers who served.

## Letter to the editor

# Christmas for the 101st: WWII and OIF

*To all my friends in Iraq:*

*I had originally planed to write a story on the 101st at Christmas and compare it to the 101st of 59 years ago, the battling bastards of Bastogne, who spent their Christmas hip deep in the snows of Belgium.*

*It truly pains me to be here in the security of my home, enjoying the holidays while those whom I now regard as my brothers are so far away, in harms way and acutely feeling the personal hardship of being so far removed from their loved ones.*

*Your fellow 101'ers found that in 1944, the public gratitude of those recently liberated from the yoke of tyranny was short lived and as we regrettably found out, what gratitude they may have had has not been handed down from generation to generation.*

*Your situation is markedly different.*

*Your hard work and selfless sacrifices are insuring that the*

*101st's presence in Iraq will be felt in a positive manner for generations to come.*

*You are doing more than re-building a nation, your are building bright futures and writing a new chapter in your storied history of valor, courage and sacrifice.*

*I wish I could thank each of you personally and wish you a Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah and a joyous New Year.*

*I only hope that I can do your story justice and that all will come to know you as I did during my stay with you.*

*Please know that I, and all whom I know, are there with you in sprit and with gratitude this Christmas season. God Bless you and protect you, every one.*

*Stay safe and well.*

*Philip Schreier*

*National Rifle Association*

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**On the cover:** A U.S. soldier and two Iraqi contractors look upon the 30-foot Christmas tree at the Civil Military Operations Command building in Mosul Christmas Eve The tree was brought in and decorated by Iraqi contractors at the building.

# Troops celebrate Christmas in Iraq

By Pfc. Chris Jones  
40<sup>th</sup> PAD

**N**ORTHERN IRAQ -- Sgt. Paul Mauney trudges through crowds at the Atlanta International Airport. He's pushing an artificial Christmas tree in a rolling cart and enjoying the attention onlookers are giving him. The nickname he's been dubbed with, "Christmas Tree Soldier," seems appropriate.

One week later, "the Freedom Tree" is sitting gloriously beside Mauney's office at the Division Main compound in Mosul, Iraq, where the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division is headquartered. Now adorned with bright lights and bells of silver, blue, red and green, Mauney says his evergreen friend is a memory in the making – a charming, spirited combat zone comrade to him and his fellow soldiers.

"Christmas to me is very special," Mauney said. "It's different in Iraq, because you're not with your family, but in a way it's the same, because you're with your Army family."

A personnel assistance clerk with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 101<sup>st</sup>, Mauney is but one of the tens of thousands of troops in Northern Iraq who are refusing to let the holiday season die – combat zone Christmas or bust.

Soldiers in Mosul, Tallafar and Qayarah, the three main cities housing soldiers with or attached to the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, are immersing themselves into dozens of events celebrating the holiday season through New Year's Day. Live nativities, caroling, gift exchanges, raffle contests and even a "Best Grinch" Contest are among the countless activities spawned by troops.

Capt. (Chaplain) John Stutz, commander of the 127th Chaplain Detachment, a two-man ministry unit out of Fort Sam Houston, Texas attached to the 101st, said the work he's put in organizing events for the Christmas season "has been a joy."

"I think it's so joyful to see that, no matter all the things we don't have here, the spirit of Christmas remains," he said. "A lot of the stuff we treasure in America, we don't have here. But what we're learning is that this stuff isn't what makes joy; it just makes big piles of material possessions. The true joy comes from the inside."

Inside or outside, the 101<sup>st</sup> is making Christmas happen. Kellogg Brown and

Root Dining Facilities across the 101<sup>st</sup> area of operations have been offering soldiers a chance to win various prizes with a raffle contest dubbed *The 12 Days of Christmas*. Soldiers get the chance to win goodies such as DVD players, compact disc players and various CDs, while chewing their dinner in massively decorated facilities.

The KBR dining facility in Tallafar, supporting the 101<sup>st</sup>'s 187<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment "Rakkasans", is so bedecked with Christmas cheer, each television set in the building is paired with its own Christmas tree, and the beverage stands are all adorned with 6" stick-on Santa Clause images. As Sgt. Marien Cuthbert put it while eating dinner and glancing around, "It's kind of hard to forget what time of year it is."

At the Division Rear compound in Mosul, soldiers organized a live nativity service, while soldiers of the 501<sup>st</sup> Signal Battalion are scheduling a Christmas caroling event for Monday.

Soldiers of the 21<sup>st</sup> Combat Support Hospital are throwing a "Christmas Eve EVE Party" Tuesday at Division Rear, while troops of HHC, 101<sup>st</sup> are arranging a Christmas Eve dance party with a disc jockey and free snacks and beverages.

The "winner" of the Best Grinch Contest, a two-week long competition to determine

the grumpiest soldier on the Division Main compound, will be announced Christmas Day. Stutz, who helped organize the contest, said even the "Grinchiest" of soldiers are coming around to the Christmas cheer, noting that the triumphant grouch will be awarded accordingly.

"Even the worst Grinches are saying, 'yeah, this is all right,'" Stutz said.

Stutz has also been involved in Operation Shoebox, a nationwide trust aimed at supporting soldiers serving in the Middle East. He's received hundreds of boxes in the mail from Americans in Texas, Ohio, Kentucky and other states to disperse among 101<sup>st</sup> troops.

"These aren't cheap things that are being sent to us," he said. "Some of these boxes are filled with over \$50 worth of gifts. On Christmas Day, we'll hand the packages out to soldiers. I'm looking for the Grinches. They're the ones who usually need the gifts, not because they can't get what's in the gift elsewhere, but because they're usually the ones who need to be handed a gift, to let them know they've always got someone looking out for them. We want to make their heart increase three sizes."

**See CHRISTMAS, page 11**



Soldiers of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division leave the headquarters palace on the Division Main compound in Mosul Saturday night, while an inflatable snowman with an AK-47 watches their movements. The snowman was put up by soldiers of the 101st for the holiday season.

# 'Operation Santa Strike' swarms Mosul homeless shelter

by Pfc. Thomas Day  
40th PAD

It started as a simple email from the commander of the 2-44th Air Defense Artillery, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), to his Army colleagues back in the United States. Tuesday "Operation Santa Strike" and "Operation Overcoat" brought more than 500 pounds of coats, clothes, shoes, and toys from 35 different homes, churches and other community organizations to an Internally Displaced Persons home in Mosul.

Lt. Col. Donald Fryc of Odenton, Md., contacted everyone in his email address book looking for every soldier from all over the Continental United States who he could find to help him with his new project. "We had a cold spell for about two or three days and it really struck me that there was a great need out there in the coming winter months for the kids. That was the genesis of the idea for 'Operation Overcoat.'"

The response was overwhelming. "I asked them to carry the messages to their churches and they all replied back and said, 'the boxes are on their way.'"

Fryc and his battalion chaplain, Chap. (Capt.) Jay West of Poca, W.V., led the charge to get the goodies to out to an IDP home located within their Mosul compound, Camp Claiborne. The 2-44th ADA soldiers too were eager to help. "From a chaplains perspective, I would hope those folks learned today that the American soldiers have the biggest hearts in the world," West said.

The excitement on the faces of the kids was palpable. One kid, about the age of five, actually climbed on the back of Fryc's humvee, barefoot. Fryc immediately gave him the last pair of shoes he had in his limited supply. The shoes fit perfectly. "I'll tell you, he smiled a smile that I'll remember for a long time."

Fryc's mission came just in time for the roughly 200 Iraqis who received jackets, clothes and shoes from "Operation Santa Strike" and "Operation Overcoat." Monday's temperatures in Mosul ranged in the forties with punishing winds and rain.

"It's a continuance of building trust," Fryc said. "These people, day in and day out, they're fighting for their survival." The 2-44th ADA mission figures to go a long way in what Maj. Gen. David H. Petraeus, 101st Airborne Division commanding general, calls the division's "Charm Offensive."

"It's amazing what these folks don't have," Fryc said. "We're here to help."



photos by Pfc. Thomas Day

(Above) A 2-44th Air Defense Artillery soldier hands out goodies as a part of "Operation Santa Strike." (Below) A Mosul youth sports his new jacket, donated to him from the 2-44th Air Defense Artillery's "Operation Santa Strike."



# Mosul area houses of worship receive heaters

By Pfc. Thomas Day  
40th PAD

As part of a nearly \$30,000 project to supply heaters to local mosques and churches, the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) Friday delivered 100 kerosene heating machines to the Ninevah province Ministry of Religious Affairs.

To date, 200 additional heaters have been supplied to the ministry office, where imams and priests pick them up to heat their mosques and churches during the cold winter months. Fifty of those heaters went to local churches. The initiative was directed by Maj. Gen. David H. Petraeus, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) commanding general, as part of his continuing engagement policy, according to the division's top chaplain.

"He's putting up the money for this. It's money out of his office. I'm just the gopher to make it happen," said Chap. (Lt. Col.) Chester Egert of Hampton, Va., division chaplain for 101st Airborne Division. Egert oversaw the Friday heater drop in Mosul.

The heaters will of course serve more practical needs than just making goodwill with the citizens of Mosul. Mosques and churches with electrical heat will now have an insurance policy for when the power goes out. "It does make a dent in their needs," Egert said. "They're absolutely delighted to receive these heaters."

Egert and Dr. Saleh Khalif Saleh, Ninevah minister of religious affairs, have worked together for the heater drops and future plans to rebuild the ministry office, located just a block from the Mosul City Government Building. The building's leaky roof has caused flooding in the basement, where archive files are stored, some of which are centuries old. "Some of their records and paperwork have been badly damaged," according to Egert.

Likely, not all of the 1,200 mosques in the Ninevah Province will receive a heater, but the efforts will continue. "On the sociopolitical side of things, I think it extends a hand to the local populace. You could say were both *Guns and Roses*," said Chap. (Capt.) John Stutz of Austin, Tex., 101st Airborne Division chaplain.



Pfc. Thomas Day

A group of Mosul citizens help unload a truck load of electric heaters for the Ninevah Ministry of Religious Affairs. The heaters will be used to warm places of worship throughout the city.

# Iron Rakkasans, engineers clear UXO-littered region

By Pfc. Chris Jones  
40<sup>th</sup> PAD

**B**ADUSH REGION, Iraq -- With each step the soldiers took, their fawn-colored boots bore deeper into spongy, wet mud.

They trekked slowly up a steep hill, eyes to the ground six feet ahead. All around them were dozens of pieces of unexploded ordnance, and one soldier, sidestepping a mortar round, chirped, "BOOM! Four soldiers were wounded in Iraq today..."

His premonitory news telecast, through comically inclined, had also its share of relevance. The soldier, Maj. Collin Fortier, operations officer, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 187<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Air Assault) knows the dangers that face his 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion "Iron Rakkasans" during their current mission in the Badush region of Northern Iraq. The hills in this region are littered with unexploded ordnance (UXO), and two platoons of the Iron Rakkasans, as well as a team of engineers with the 326<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion, are set to clear this dangerous land by destroying the nearly ten-thousand UXOs lying recklessly in the remnants of former regime ammunition posts.

"It's definitely dangerous work," Fortier said.

Infantrymen from 5<sup>th</sup> Platoon, Company D, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon, Company B, were recently tasked with identifying thousands of UXOs across the mountainous Badush region, while engineers of the 326<sup>th</sup>'s 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, Company C have been toiling to blockade entry in and out of the treacherous area.

The soldiers left their bunks in Tallafar last week and merged into a large wooden building at the heart of the Badush region, nestled at the summit of a rocky crag east of Northern-Iraq's largest city of Mosul. Despite the starkness the three days of constant rain made the site by Wednesday, and regardless of the menace the UXOs played for the troops, as infantryman Spc. Christian Hanna put it, "we've seen worse."

Hanna, like many other infantrymen with Company B, plays dual-roles – at night, as an observation post guard, searching for shepherders and other travelers, and during the day identifying UXOs with a contracted team of demolition experts.

Hanna's role as a sentry tower guard has been made easier, he said, by the moon's illumination of nearly the entire region. On a

post at a hilltop, he said he can see all movements up to more than 500 meters away.

"Since I've been here, the moon has been real bright," he said. "I can see 500 meters, easy. I see a lot of animals walking around at night. We have a problem with wolves out here, too."

While guard duty has been Hanna's pri-

mary responsibility, he said the few times he has spent with the demolition team have gone smoothly.

"We haven't run into any problems yet," Hanna said. "We've stayed safe so far, but I wouldn't go banging a hammer around."

**See UXO, page 11**



Pfc. Chris Jones

Soldiers of 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, stretch concertina wire over a barbed wire blockade to keep Iraqi citizens protected from fields littered with thousands of pieces of unexploded ordnance.

# *USO Tour visits 101st soldiers*



photos by Spc. Joshua M. Risner

(Above) Country music performer Mark Willis says a few words of encouragement to the troops in a dining facility at the airfield in Mosul. Willis spoke of his father, who served with the 101st in Vietnam, in his speech. (Below) The R&B trio, "No Illusion" sign autographs and chat with the soldiers. The girls also posed for photos with the troops.



# Mosul Central Bank rebuilding project begins

by Pfc. Thomas Day  
40th PAD

The 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and the Central Bank of Iraq began a project Monday to rebuild the Mosul Central Bank, left in ruins by looters after the fall of Saddam in March. The building is now just a burned out cavern of what was the local central bank, it is expected to be complete by early 2005.

Iraq's central bank is divided into three branches, much like the American Federal Reserve. The other two branches will be centered in Baghdad and Basra, with the Northern Iraq branch headquartered in Mosul. All of the funding for the rebuilding initiative, projected to be more than one million dollars, comes from the Iraqi Central Bank in Mosul.

The project will be divided into two phases. The first phase, which is underway, will replace windows, rebuild the roofs and build a three-meter tall cement and steel wall around the building's perimeter. That portion of the project will likely last around 120 days.

The second phase will be much more extensive and will probably not be finished for a year. It will encompass the building's plumbing and electrical work, a new marble floor and a security system, which will include new tinted windows and thick, "heavy duty" doors for added protection, according to Capt. Elizabeth Scioletti, 37th Engineering Battalion.

"The majority of this is just maintaining and preserving the architecture of the bank, but there will be improvements in the security systems as well as the aesthetics just to keep up with modern times...the building was built in 1967," Scioletti said.

Maj. Gen. David H. Petraeus, division commander, and Ninevah Province Governor Ghanim al-Basso opened the project with a mid-day ceremony and the obligatory cut of a ribbon.

"This required a lot of teamwork," Petraeus said. "Teamwork between engineers was key. Teamwork between different engineering battalions, teamwork between engineers of Iraq and teamwork between the engineers of Ninevah and this great city of Mosul."

The 101st commander also highlighted the correlation between the new bank proj-

ect and three other major transactions in the city of Mosul. Earlier this week, private companies paid seven million and 17 million dollars, respectively, for the rights to the Mosul Hotel and a new supermarket to be built in the city. In addition, another corporation agreed to a major oil trade deal with Northern Iraq and Syria.

"It's a very symbolic as well as substantive achievement," Petraeus added.

While the March looting led to what must have been a spectacular fire, melting the cement walls and ceilings, the basic structure of the building has remained intact. The building is a picturesque sight and was originally designed by a top Iraqi architect.

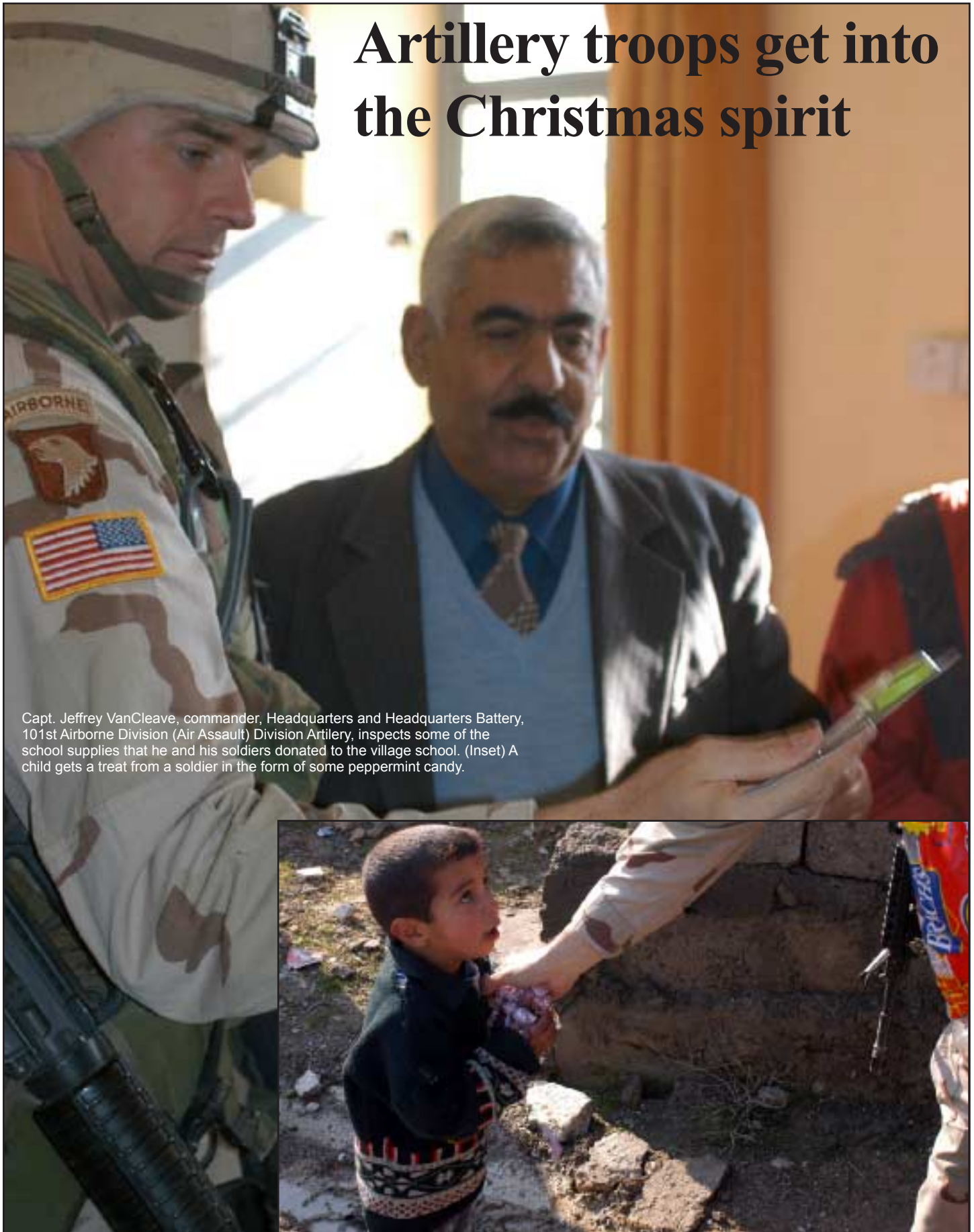


Pfc. Thomas Day

Bank guards keep an eye on Mosul Central Bank, which is being rebuilt. Maj. Gen. David H. Petraeus, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) commanding general, and Ninevah Governor Ghanim al-Basso, opened the one-year renovation project at the bank Monday.



# Artillery troops get into the Christmas spirit



Capt. Jeffrey VanCleave, commander, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) Division Artillery, inspects some of the school supplies that he and his soldiers donated to the village school. (Inset) A child gets a treat from a soldier in the form of some peppermint candy.



Pfc. Thomas Day

Mosul city dignitaries, including Ninevah Province Governor Ghanim al-Basso (center) and Mosul Police Chief Muhammed Bahawi (left), join Brig. Gen. Frank Helmick (right) in saluting the Iraqi National Anthem during the opening ceremony Sunday for the new Mosul Police Station.

## 101st Airborne, Mosul police open new main station

by Pfc. Thomas Day  
40th PAD

The 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) opened a new downtown police headquarters in Iraq's second largest city Sunday. The police headquarters will now serve as a nexus for the 4,200 policemen in Mosul, just seven months after being thoroughly looted following the defeat of Saddam Hussein in April.

The station is collocated with another police station and includes an auditorium and a command center upstairs, where all Mosul Police operations will be organized. The new police headquarters station and the renovation of the contiguous station were made possible by \$118,000 of Coalition Provisional Authority funds.

The 108th Military Police Company from Fort Bragg, N.C., attached to the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), has operated out of the police station since May while the facility underwent rebuilding. Sunday, with Brig. Gen. Frank Helmick, 101st Airborne Division assistant division commander (operations), the company opened the headquarters for business.

Helmick played the role of coalition ambassador, with Ninevah Province Governor Ghanim al-Basso and Mosul Police Chief Muhammad Bahawi also in attendance.

"This station will become a model for all others to emulate," said Sgt. First Class Mason Causey of Moultrie, Ga., "This is an important step in transforming the police department."

Bahawi spoke during the ceremony, calling the new station "beautiful, like a flower." The Mosul Police Chief also added some words of inspiration for his policemen. "By the hands of God, we are going to destroy the bad people because we are going to serve the citizens," he said.

Capt. Christine Whitmer of Billings, Mont., 108th MP Company commander, shared Bahawi's optimism for the new force. All of the new policemen who have joined the force since the 101st Airborne Division began operating in the Ninevah Province have completed the Mosul Police Safety Academy, an eight-week training program administered by American soldiers, she said.

Policemen have been armed with Glockes and AK-47s, issued new uniforms with internationally recognized ranks, and given additional equipment including cars.

"They're working with us, we're working with them," Whitmer said. "The wheels are turning."

**UXO, from page 6**

Once the infantrymen locate and identify the UXOs, the team of demolition experts collects them and transports them to a blasting site in the mountains and explodes them. Blasting sites are chosen meticulously, each with more a radius of more than 500 meters of vacant land.

While the infantrymen search and identify, and while the demo experts destroy the ammo, the engineers of the 326<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion have spent the last week creating barricades – soil mounds for vehicles and a barbed wire fence for those on foot – around the region to keep Iraqi citizens from potential tragedy, as well as to keep insurgents or terrorists from using the stockpile of UXOs as arsenal against Coalition Forces, which Fortier said may be responsible for a number of attacks against U.S. troops in Northern Iraq.

Spc. Michael Patterson, a bulldozer operator for the 326<sup>th</sup>, said the recent increase in rainfall has hindered his role in the mission. While the rainy season, as locals call the

wet winter and early spring months, is a blessing for many Iraqi citizens, the muddy ground caused by the drizzle has forced him and fellow soldier Spc. Joshua Nettles, to halt construction of six-foot soil barriers to keep vehicles out of the “danger area.”

“Rain keeps us from working, period,” he said. “Rain is a big factor with us, because our tractor will just slide around all over the place.”

While the demolition teams continue detonating the UXOs in spite of work continuing on the soil barricade, Patterson said it’s a gap that cannot be overlooked.

“We need [the barricade] to help keep potential terrorists out of the caches, because this is what they’ve been using against us,” he said.

According to Fortier, the project dates back to 1991, during the Gulf War, when intelligence reports confirmed large weapons caches in the Badush region of Northern Iraq. The U.S. Air Force bombed the sites, but no ground forces were sent in to clean up the mess.

Twelve years later, the Iron Rakkasans are doing just that.

**CHRISTMAS, from page 3**

Meanwhile at the palace on Division Main, the 101<sup>st</sup>'s G-6 office is buzzing with holiday fanatics. The self-proclaimed “best decorated office in the palace” received its Christmas makeover on the previous holiday – Thanksgiving. Chief Warrant Officer Two Carrie McLeish, automation technician for the 101<sup>st</sup>'s G-6 office at the palace on Division Main, contacted her mother and asked if she could send holiday decorations for the office. At the same time, Maj. Tim Solie had asked his wife, Diana, if she could do the same.

The decorations got sent. Lots of them.

By early December, the office had been so remarkably festooned with bells, lights and tinsel of red, green and silver, supervised by figures of Santa, angels and elves, soldiers passing through the halls of the palace had only to gawk at the office door, and the banner above which reads simply: PEACE ON EARTH.

The holiday season has been strange for McLeish. While the holiday season has elevated her longing to be home with her two sons, irony has twisted itself in a knot and kept half the family together. Her husband, Paul, a staff sergeant in the Army, deployed at the same time as her and now works with her at the palace.

“It’s pretty funny,” McLeish said. “It was nice to be able to decorate the Christmas tree with him out here.”

The blessing is especially bittersweet, as the two both agree that having a period of time set aside for loved ones is the best part of Christmas.

While the bulk of 101<sup>st</sup> troops – in Mosul, Tallafar and Qayarah – are enclosed in Christmas sentiment, soldiers in the more remote locales of Northern Iraq are relying more on the inner strength and discipline they’ve acquired in Iraq to keep their spirits up until they return to the U.S.

Back in Mosul, Mauney’s six-foot Christmas tree has more than met its match. In the lobby of the CMOC stands a glorious 30-foot cedar tree. Around the evergreen mammoth stand a group of Iraqis, smiling and laughing. Chaplain Stutz, however, is utterly confused.

“That tree is bigger than any door in the building,” said Stutz, eyes wide in perplexity. “A team of Iraqi farmers helped bring it in, but I simply cannot imagine how they got it in through any of the doors. Every day, the farmers ask me, ‘do you see it? Do you see it?’ I’m like, yeah, I see it. And I don’t know how you did it.”

# The Judge Says...

## Items of legal interest to soldiers

**Q: If I have a court case, can I be my own attorney?**

**A:** *Suppose you are involved in a lawsuit, perhaps suing a neighbor whose dog damaged the fence between your properties. Or you want to contest a speeding ticket. Can you be your own attorney?*

*If the matter is being handled in a “small claims court,” where disputes are usually of a low dollar amount, serving as your own attorney may be the most cost-effective course of action. It would not make sense for example, to hire an attorney at \$200 an hour to sue over a \$100 dispute.*

*By the same token, when the costs of the dispute are high, an attorney may be necessary. It is hard to imagine a multi-million dollar case against an auto manufacturer being handled by a non-attorney. This is especially true when the opposite side may have a team of lawyers on their side!*

*It is generally best to seek the advice of an attorney before pursuing a case or presenting a defense. If the matter is small, self-representation may be possible. In a significant matter however, hiring an attorney, preferably one with an appropriate level of experience, is critical.*

**Q: What about legal software?**

**A:** *There are many types of “Be Your Own Attorney”-style software, that allow you to draft wills or prepare divorce paperwork.*

*Unfortunately, such programs can produce documents that may not stand up in court if you do not know the law of your state.*

*Soldiers are entitled to free advice on most personal legal issues, so check with Legal Assistance before buying legal software.*

**Preventive law tip of the week:**

*Gold is often called a sound investment. But is it?*

*It can be, as the demand for gold is greater than the supply, so its price is high and relatively stable.*

*Some scam artists claim that gold prices will rise rapidly soon due to some coming crisis, and offer to quickly sell and gold coins or ingots. Since the gold is said to be in storage, some firms simply pocket the money, claiming to sell gold that does not even exist! When buying precious metals, only deal with a reputable firm.*

# Man on the Street

## What does the holiday season mean to you?



“Spending time with family, opening presents and counting blessings.”

- 1st Lt. Terrance Wright, 37th Engineer Battalion

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“Playing with my kids’ toys.”

- Sgt. 1st Class Patrick Carver, 37th Eng. Bn.

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“It’s about remembering why we’re here in the first place, what’s really important.”

- Capt. Terri Robbins, 311th Military Intelligence Battalion

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“A reward after hard times.”

- Bashar Abduwlah, interpreter

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“Stressful family gatherings.”

- 1st Lt. Leo Barrow, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 327th Infantry Regiment

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“Snow. I wish it would snow here, so I could have some company.”

- Frosty, door guard, Division Main

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